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THE

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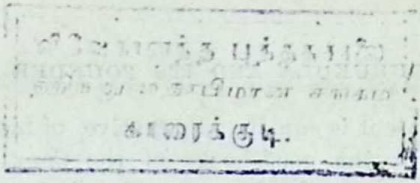

THE GURUKULA AND ITS FOUNDER

Bold was the dream, but bolder was the dreamer than the dream. It is impossible to think of the Gurukula, Kangri, without Mahatma Munshi Ram. That great soul caught fire by coming into contact with Rishi Dayananda, a blazing mass of divine energy. Mad was the epithet flung against Mahatma Munshi Ram when he declared his seemingly wild project to start a Gurukula. But when has anything really great been achieved except by those whom the world called mad ?

This visionary has written in Hindi a very interesting and instructive biography which every aspirant after righteousness should read. He was born in Talwan, a village in Jullundhar, in the year 1857. His parents were both religiously disposed. His father was the Chief Police Officer in different places at different times. Regularly and devoutly he worshipped his God and read Tulsi Ramayana, several verses of which he got by heart. His mother combined tenderness with common sense in an uncommon degree and never fondled her children excessively. Two incidents of his student life are well worth recording as they throw a flood of light on the stuff of which he was made. He had been bred up as a Sanatanist and an idol-worshipper. Once, while going to enter a temple he was stopped by the policeman on duty and asked to wait till a particular 'Rani' or queen who had gone in for worship came out. "What" thought the young devotee, "can there be partiality even in the house of God ? Can this partial idol be the real God ?" Questionings like these arose, belief in idol-worship vanished, and the seeker after truth returned without waiting for the Rani to come out.

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The other incident is equally illustrative of his character. As his father was in the good books of the Commissioner of Bareilly, the latter to show his pleasure offered for the son the post of Naib Tahsildar. Munshi Ram accepted the post and discontinued his studies. Once he went to see the Commissioner. He was asked to wait outside for some time. In the meanwhile an English merchant came and entered the room without seeking permission. This gave a serious shock to his sense of self-respect and the fallen condition of his country came vividly before his mind's eye. He returned without seeing the Commissioner, tendered his resignation and never again sought Government service. The lion could not be tamed.

His Fill of Pleasures

But he who refused to bend his knee before bureaucrats surrendered himself to the seductive charms of earthly pleasures. Due to this father's great influence in the city, he could do with impunity many things which others feared to do. Endowed with health, wealth, strength, youth and freedom he would have been more than human, had he not succumbed to the pleasures of the senses. With his jolly companions, of whom there is never any dearth for a rich young man, he smoked and drank and danced and sang and had his fill of sensual enjoyments.

The meeting with Rishi Dayanand and later a careful perusal of *Satyarth Prakash*, the immortal work of the great Rishi, turned the tide and completely revolutionised his life. Whatever he did, he did with a characteristic thoroughness. Thoroughly he had enjoyed, thoroughly he repented, thoroughly he renounced. With him there was no doing things in a wavering half-hearted manner. The storm came and swept away all the rubbish. What he left, he left for good. He cast no 'longing lingering look' on the life of self-indulgence that he renounced. Lustfulness, drinking, meat-eating, smoking—all

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were gone for ever and not a sigh of regret was expressed. He now bent his energies to his studies, creditably passed examination in law and began to practise as a pleader in Jullundhar.

After the Change

Arya Samaj had just been founded in the Punjab. Mahatma Munshi Ram began to take part in its activities and soon rose, by virtue of his ability, selflessness and character, to a position of distinction. When due to different ideals in education and different views regarding meat eating, a split took place, and Arya Samaj was divided into the 'Culture party' and ' Mahatma party''. Mahatma Munshi Ram began to lead the Mahatma party. He was a very successful pleader, but wordly ambition and social service go ill together, for they go against each other. For some time the struggle continued. The service of Arya Samaj gradually gained the upper hand and professional practice began to dwindle. A paper *Sart Dharma Prachark* was started to carry on the prapaganda of Arya Samaj and eradicate social evils. In those days Mahatma Munshi Ram with a party of devotees used to go early in the morning through Jullundhar with the beggar's bowel in his hand, singing songs of devotion and collecting funds for the Arya Samaj. In his autobiography while recalling the innocent ways and singing service of those days, Mahatma Munshi Ram confesses that those days were the happiest period of his life. Those Arya Samajists who attach too much importance to controversy should please note that as in the case of Swami Dayanand, so in the case of Mahatma Munshi Ram, there was another aspect, the aspect of faith, of devotion, manifest in these simple spontaneous *Kirtans*, the aspect which was the true cause of their real greatness and tremendous activity.

In Jullundhar, Mahatma Munshi Ram not only edited his paper, but took a very prominent part in various kinds of social reform activities carried on by the Arya Samaj. Along with

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L. Dev Rajji he conceived and created the Kanya Maha Vidyalaya, Jullundhar, which is the premier institution of its kind in the Punjab at this time.

His Great Resolve

After earnest meditation over the best means of serving his great Guru, his great religion, his great country, he came to the conclusion that the Gurukula of Dayanand's dreams should be brought into existence. That way lay the salvation of India. The children of to-day are the nation of to-morrow. But how and where are the children being brought up and what sort of nation will they thus grow into? Surely the tender buds cannot blossom properly in the foul and contaminated air of the cities. Far, far away from the turmoil and tainted air of the towns, take these little saplings and plant them in the free and fresh atmosphere of the jungles near a mountain or a river. Thus alone can they grow up strong and high, thus alone can they bear fragrant flowers and delicious fruits, thus alone can they furnish cool peaceful shade for troubled souls.

Imbued with such ideas Mahatma Munshi Ram made a stern resolve to start a Gurukula in the very lap of nature. People laughed. Where was the money to come from? Who would send his children to the jungles? But our hero stood firm against ridicule. He stuck to his resolve. He spent days of toil and nights of vigil to realise the dream of his Guru. Money came. Children came. A suitable site, between the 'Nilgiri' and the 'Nildhara,' with Himalayas on one side and Ganges on the other, was offered as a free gift by L. Aman Singh, a great philanthropist.

Those who had ridiculed began to respect both the dreamer and the dream. The jungle was cleared; huts were built and the great soul with a few children began his novel experiment far away from the din and dirt of cities. Tigers roamed freely at night about the place where the Gurukula was started.

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They were angry with the man who had usurped part of their empire. They roared and the children trembled, but the strong protecting arm and the stout courageous heart of our hero were always with them to comfort and encourage. Under his loving guidance they learnt to face with courage the dangers of the forest, to bear with equanimity the inclemencies of the weather, to move about bare-headed, and bare-footed in the biting cold of winter or the scorching summer sun.

Traditions then estabilished, traditions of simplicity, austerity, courage are a great asset of the Gurukula and a perennial source of inspiration and life both to its students and its staff.

Free and Independent

As the last Ganges flood swept away most of the buildings, it was considered prudent to shift the Gurukula to the opposite side of the river along the Ganges canal. Here too the Gurukula has got vast and beautiful lands and new buildings have been set up in an incredibly short time, thanks to the generosity of the Hindus and the tireless energy of Prof. Dev Rajji Sethi. The Gurukula is not affiliated to any Indian University. It has up till now successfully resisted all temptation to affiliation. Once asked by a high Government official to get the Gurukula affiliated Mahatma Munshi Ram replied: "Let there be at least one independent institution in India entirely free from Government control and influence"

Boys are admitted at the age of 7 or 8. They have to live in Gurukula for 14 years, 10 years for the school course and 4 years the college course. The school course is like the ordinary school course outside, with this difference that special attention is paid to the teaching of Sanskrit and the ancient religious scriptures and that Indian history is taught from the national standpoint, so that students learn to respect their ancestors for their material, intellectual and spritual greatness; and not to look down upon them as semi-barbarians.

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After the school course, we have three colleges, the Veda College, the Arts College, the Ayurveda College. Most of the subjects in the Veda College and the Arts College are common—except that in the Veda College, the students read a little more about the Vedas and in the Arts College more about Hindi, Sanskrit and English literature. Vedas and Upanishads, Darshans, Sanskrit literature, Hindi literature, English are compulsory subjects. Chemistry, Philosophy, History, Economics are elective subjects.

In the Ayurveda College, allopathy and surgery are taught along with *Charak* and *Sushrat*. In this college also the study of the Vedas is compulsory. The graduates of the Arts College are called Vidya Alankar and those of the Ayurveda College Ayurveda Alankar.

At Play and At Work

Students perform congregational *Sandhya* and *Havan* both in the morning and the evening. They get up at 4-30 and go to sleep before ten at night. Some sort of daily exercise is compulsory for all. Hockey is a favourite game of the students. In summer they enjoy swimming. Both in All-India Hockey tournaments and in All-India Swimming competitions the students have achieved great distinction. They have also got several debating clubs ; they have more than once achieved great distinction in the Inter-'Varsity debates held in the Benares Hindu University. People marvel both when they speak and when they play. The swiftness of the deer is in their feet and the force of winds is in their voice. They are really the children of nature, for they are brought up in the midst of the beautiful and the sublime scenes of nature. Unconsciously they imbibe the energy of nature and manifest it in their movements. Last year' the students won the trophy in the Inter-'Varsity debate in Benares. Speaking of one of our Brahamcharis who stood first, a Professor who was present in the debate remarked that when Brahmachari Veda Vrat

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began to speak it appeared as if a tremendous force of nature that had been pent up was let loose and was carrying everything before it.

Distinct Advantages

In the Gurukula, there is a very happy combination of the East and the West. Clinging firmly to all that is essential in their culture, the Gurukula welcomes and appropriates all that is best in the West. The Gurukula steers clear of Scylla and Charybdis, the superstitious adherence to the old on the one hand and the wholesale rejection of the new on the other. Passion for truth is its dominant characteristic. It does not take anything for granted. It submits everything to the test of reason, accepts what is true and discards what is false.

Gurukula students have a certain air of independence about them. Hindi being the medium of instruction even in the college, they thoroughly enjoy and appreciate what they are taught, whether their own scriptures or modern sciences. They are well versed in the study of the poets and the philosophers of the past. They draw inspiration from the noble sayings of their ancestors and freely quote them in their conversation. To them Indian culture is not dead. It is a living thing. It lives in them ; they live in it.

But there is an even greater advantage in Gurukula education. It is its insistence on Brahamcharya or Continence. Due to early marriages and other social evils, the nation is rapidly deteriorating. The Gurukula cries halt to this rapid downward movement, gets hold of boys at the age of seven or eight, removes them from the dirty and devitalising atmosphere of the towns, nourishes them with the nectar of knowledge and enables them to grow up strong in body, mind and soul.

Distinguished Old Students

Strong bodies, sharp intellects, pure character, fearless hearts—these make a nation great and these the Gurukula

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undertakes to develop. Feats of physical strength or skill in archery are displayed every year by Gurukula Brahmacharis and Gurukula graduates on the occasion of the Gurukula anniversary. Among those who have distinguished themselves in this direction, may be mentioned the names of Desh Bandhu and Vivekananda.

With the sharp intellects of Pandit Budha Devji, Pandit Vishwa Nathji, Pandit Jai Chandraji, Pandit Indraji and several others, the Arya Samajists are not unfamiliar. Pandit Jai Chandji has achieved special distinction for valuable original research in ancient Indian History. Pandit Satya Ketuji has won the All-India Prize for the best book in Hindi by writing an original and authoritative book on the History of the Maurya Empire.

The pure character of Pandit Yudhishthirji, Pandit Dev Sharmaji and Pandit Dev Rajji shines like the sun. To live with them is to lift oneself morally and spiritually. Their lives are eloquent sermons on the Ten Commandments. Pandit Dev Sharma is endowed with great qualities of head and heart. Austere, self-denying, a Raj Yogi, a Karma Yogi, a Hatha Yogi, a profound vedic scholar, a devoted patriot, a steady tireless worker, a youth of stern resolve and dedicated life, he is verily the Gandhi of Gurukula.

Pandit Dharmpalji, the unarmed captor of the Muslim fanatic who, armed with a loaded revolver, shot Shradhanandji; Pandit Saytapalji and Pandit Ishwar Duttaji, who, while they were students, attacked a wild leopard with hockey-sticks in their hands and lots of other Pal's and Dutt's yet unknown to fame but possessed of hearts no less brave—these the Gurukula is rightly proud of.

Budha Dev and Dev Sharma, both fine products of Gurukula, are each great in their own way. Budha Dev is poetical; Dev Sharma is puritanical. Budha Dev is impulsive and ardent;

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Dev Sharma is slow and steady. Budha Dev is heroic and excites admiration ; Dev Sharma is saintly and evokes respect. Power, poetry, fine frenzy radiate from Budha Dev. Peace, holiness, austerity radiate from Dev Sharma. Both have produced-first class vedic literature.

The Austere Example

Such are some of the flowers of the garden of Gurukula planted by Mahatma Munshi Ram. While admiring the flowers, one must not forget the gardener. In Gurukula, Mahatma Munshi Ram led a very austere and ideal life. Young men, it has been well said, are more easily led than driven. Mahatma Munshi Ram himself first practised what he preached to the students. He woke up at 3-30 in the morning every day, took vigorous exercise and cold water bath, performed Sandhya and Agnihotra and meditated on the Gayatri for one hour. After this he attended to other business. His students looked up to him with great respect, and loved him as their father. Gurukula was certainly his 'Kula', all students were his children.

After Sanyas

After estsblishing a beautiful home for his children and entrusting them to other guardians, Mahatma Munshi Ram took Sanyas, left Gurukula, and began to work for the social and political uplift of India. Many were the activities in which he took a leading part. Throughout the length and breadth of India, from wherever a cry of distress, or need of service arose, there Swami Shraddhanand, whom henceforth we must call by his new name, with the utmost expedition arrived. He went to the Punjab after the Jallianwala massacre during the Martial Law regime, visited the orphans and the widows, wiped their tears and comforted their hearts. When the Satyagraha of Guruka Bagh was going on, Swamiji arrived on the spot to help the Akalis and was thrown into jail. When Malkanas expressed a desire to be brought back into the Hindu fold, Swamiji at

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once ran to embrace them. Hindu Sangathan, uplift of the Untouchables, Satyagraha, these and several other movements gained a great impetus by his tireless work and unflagging zeal. Himself full of life, he infused life into every sphere in which he worked.

Swami Shraddhanand was tall and strongly built. He had a very powerful personality. His appearance, his gait, his speech, all bore a heroic stamp. He was a Kshatriya both by birth and worth. Whatever he did, he did with the air of a hero. Whatever he achieved, he achieved with the confidence of a hero. He marched on—this pilgrim of the path of righteousness—and obstacles flew from his presence like chaff before the wind. He was born to conquer and subdue. He lived like a giant amidst a generation of pigmies. He was mighty and magnanimous. By serving the lowly and the lost, he satisfied the hunger of his soul. He never disowned the poor. He never bent his knees before insolent might. The vigour with which he was pushing on the work of Shuddhi and Sangathan, was very keenly resented by a section of the Muslims who deputed a fanatic to assessinate the Swamiji. Consequently, one day while Swamiji was lying on sick bed, one Abdul Rashid came upstairs and expressed a desire to talk to Swamiji on religious matters. Swamiji replied that as soon as he recovered, he would fix a day for the purpose. The visitor asked for a cup of water; the water was at once brought. The man drank it, quieted his agitated mind and finding himself alone with Swamiji, took out a revolver and sent three shots right through the breast of the Swamiji killing him at once. Hearing the sound of shots the servant who had brought water rushed to the room to capture the assassin, but was shot in the leg, and disabled. Then Pandit Dharmapalji, a graduate of the Gurukula and the Personal Secretary of Swamiji, appeared on the scene, flung the assassin on the floor, got hold of his wrist with a most powerful grip, so that he could not move his hand, and kept him pressed

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beneath his knee till the Police Officer arrived and took from him his revolver.

Truly may it be said of Swamiji, a hero's life he lived, and a martyr's death he died. The day which beheld the funeral procession in honour of Swamiji pass through the bazaars of Delhi, will long remain a memorable day in the history of that city. People said that such a procession was never taken out even in honour of Kings. May the martyr rest in peace and may the Gurukula, his dearest creation, thrive and prosper for ever !

Chronology

1857	Born in Jullundhar (Punjab.)
1877	Married.
1878	Entered College (Allahabad.)
1880	Became Naib Tahsildar.
1883	Passed first Examination-in-Law.
1885	The tide turned and Munshi Ram became a Mahatma.
1890	SAT DHARMA PRACHARAK started.
1891	Wife died.
1894	Arya Samaj divided into two parties.
1898	Resolution passed to start Gurukula.
1899	Went out to collect funds and vowed not to return till Rs. 30,000 had been collected.
1902	Gurukula started with 30 Brahmacharis.
1917	Took Sanyas.
1919	Stood unflinchingly before the bayonets of the Gurkhas while leading a procession of Satyagrahis.
1919	Preached Hindu-Muslim unity from the pulpit of Jumma Musjid, Delhi.
1919	Visited Punjab to console and help the orphans and the widows—the victims of the Martial Law regime.

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1919	Elected Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress held in Amritsar.
1919	Re-assumed charge of Gurukula for 2 years.
1921	Came out to take part in Satyagraha.
1922	Imprisoned for supporting the Sikhs in the Guruka Bagh Satyagraha.
1923	Shuddhi Sabha started and Malkana Rajputs brought back into the Hindu fold. Swamiji elected President of the Shuddhi Sabha. Toured throughout India and delivered about 130 lectures on Shuddhi and Sangathan.
1923	Kanya Gurukula founded.
1925	Dayanand centenary celebrated in Muttra under the presidentship of Swamiji.
1926	Asgari Begum converted into Hinduism at her own request.
1926	Assassinated.

LAL CHANDRA, M. A.

TWO APPRECIATIONS

(*By Mahatma Gandhi*)

Perhaps the best result of the activity of the Arya Samaj is to be seen in the establishment and the conduct of the Gurukula. Though it depends for its vitality entirely upon the inspiring presence of Mahatmaji Munshi Ram, it is truly a national and self-governing and self-governed institution. It is totally independent of Government aid or patronage. Its war chest is filled not out of monies received from the privileged few, but from the poor many who make it a point of honour from year to year to make a pilgrimage to Kangri and willingly give their mite for maintaining this National College. Here, at every anniversary a huge crowd gathers and the manner in

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which it is handled, housed and fed evinces no mean power of organisation. But the most wonderful thing about it all is that the crowd consisting of about ten thousand men, women and children, is managed without the assistance of a single Policeman and without any fuss or semblance of force, the only force that subsists between the crowd and the managers of the Institution is that of love and mutual esteem. Fourteen years are nothing in the life of a big Institution like this. What the collegiates who have been just turned out during the last two or three years will be able to show, remains to be seen. The public will not and cannot judge men or Institutions except through the results that they show. It makes no allowance for failures. It is a most exacting judge. The final appeal of the Gurukula as of all popular Institutions, must be to this judge. Great responsibility therefore rests upon the shoulders of the students who have been discharged from the College and who have entered upon the thorny path of life. Let them beware. Meanwhile those who are well-wishers of this great experiment, may derive satisfaction from the fact that we have it as an indisputable rule of life that as the tree is, so will the fruit be. The tree looks lovely enough. He who waters it is a noble soul. Why worry about what the fruit is likely to be ?

* * *

(*By Mahendranath Sarkar*)

If the Gurukula has a special significance to the Arya Samaj, it has a wider significance as an experiment in cultural self-help. If successful, it will solve India's future educational problems on indigenous lines ; for, what is necessary for a nation with aspiration to live is indeed such an educational enterprise as can grow by itself without any extraneous help.

The Gurukula is an ideal University. While recognising the value of the Western culture and welcoming the living and helpful ideas of the Western thought and science, it has not failed to recognise the vital needs of placing the cultural ideal

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of India in the forefront and in deepening its living forces upon the impressionable minds of the youth. Life cannot develop with the administration of ideas quite foreign to the soul. True education begins with the mother's milk and the ideas that are administered with it.

It is a matter of congratulation that the Gurukula has not lost sight of instilling creative freedom in the students. They are doing useful and active services in organising educational and social boards and making the life of the community self-contained.

The *alumni* of the Gurukula can at once enter into the order of service either educational or social and can give expression to the ideas received in the formative period of their life. The teachers, the professors and the 'pracharakas' have, therefore, a living ideal. They have created a field of service for themselves. The best amongst them are inspired by the holy ideals of keeping up the institution in its vigour and activity and therefore, when they happen to enter into the order of service, they feel the living touch of the order and get inspiration from the brilliant services of the elders.

The spirit of sacrifice reigns. The sense of self-imposed duties awakens the fine sense of obligation. The joy of giving and helping finds a better expression here than in the institutions where this spirit does not dominate.